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ABSTRACT

The study's purpose was to use the Adjective Check List (ACL), a self-administered personality assessment instrument, to determine whether there were response differences between a sample of Adult Basic Education (ABE) students and the general test norms. The ACL was administered to 142 students in ABE high school completion programs in Des Moines, Iowa and in several surrounding nonurban areas, validated and scored according to test instructions. On the basis of univariate "t" and multivariate Hotellings T-square analyses, it was concluded that there were significant differences between the adult sample's ACL score and the predicted norm on 14 of 24 test scales. The ACL provided a consistent personality attribute portrait of the sample. A comparison of the interpretations of each of the 14 significantly divergent normed means found none to be in psychological opposition. The ABE sample scores showed the students tended to be more anxious, worried, and critical of themselves and others; less self-confident; less adequately socialized; less satisfied with their current status, yet less certain about adventure and risk taking; more prone to action than to thinking; at times self-centered and insensitive to others; and less trusting while more calculating in interpersonal relationships. (JR)

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THE USE OF THE ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST TO DESCRIBE THE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENT

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THE USE OF THE ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST TO DESCRIBE THE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENT

INTRODUCTION

Knox and Sjogren (1962) stressed the need for more investigation into psychological characteristics of the adult education student. A body of literature has emerged, but work is still needed to find instruments which may be used for such research with the adult basic education (ABE) students.

The purpose of this study was to use the Adjective Check List (ACL) to determine whether there were response differences between a sample of ABE students and the general norms of that instrument. It was hypothesized that there were no ACL score differences between the instrument's general norms and the ABE student sample. A significance level of .01 was selected as the minimum for concluding a real difference existed.

In as much as by definition the ABE student has not completed high school, descriptions of the characteristics of the high school

dropout were considered germane. Blough (1956) reviewed 801 studies and references to secondary school dropouts covering a period from 1872 to 1956. He ranked by frequency the correlates of non-persistence as they appeared in the literature:

(1) socio-economic status
(2) financial need
(3) preference of work over school
(4) mental ability
(5) lack of interest
(6) retardation (repeated grades)
(7) parental attitude
(8) failure

Dresher (1954) cited both negative and positive factors affecting dropouts in Detroit, Michigan. Negatively correlated with the completing of high school were:

(1) elementary school failures
(2) absences in the ninth grade
(3) low scholastic aptitude
(4) being identified as a discipline problem.

Nine factors were found to positively correlate with the students' completion of secondary education:

(1) out-of-school employment
(2) participation in extra-curricular activities
(3) possessing school spirit
(4) participation in out-of-school activities
(5) a sense of belonging to his situation
(6) good parental attitude toward education in general and toward the student's high school
(7) good parental attitude toward teachers
(8) possessing a career plan
(9) a desire to complete high school

Tesseneer and Tesseneer (1958) reviewed twenty reports of research and drew a composite picture of the high school dropout:

> Studies of dropouts have revealed a number of characteristics that many of them have in common. Most dropouts, or at least many
> (1) are sixteen or seventeen years of age and are retarded by one or more grades;
> (2) are from low-income families;
> (3) are discouraged with their work, or are failing at the time of leaving;
> (4) are dissatisfied with teaching methods;
> (5) have a feeling of not-belonging;
> (6) leave because of the lure of a job;
> (7) are from weak or broken homes (p. 143).

Stevens (1965) confirmed much of what had been reported in earlier research in his longitudinal study of youth at Fort Morgan, Colorado. He found dropouts sisgnificantly behind their age-mates in grade level. The graduate was significantly higher in grade point average, mental ability, achievement level, and reading ability. Further, the graduate was significantly differentiated from the dropout by a better attendance record; higher occupational level of the family's principle wage earner; higher educational attainment of his parents, siblings and friends; and greater participation in extra-curricular activities.

In 1948 the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) was administered to ninth grade students in Minneapolis, Minnesota. By 1951, of those students tested, 2,835 had been graduated, 421 had dropped out of school and 763 had transferred to other schools. Roessel (1954) investigated the relationship of the MMPI scales to high school completion or non-completion. Of nine of the ten MMPI scales the dropout's scores were significantly more divergent from the norms than were the scores of the graduates. Those scales included Hypochondriasis, Depression, Hysteria, Psychopathic Deviate, Paranoia, Psychasthenia, Schizophrenia, Hypomania, and Introversion - Extroversion. There was no signficant score difference with regard to the Masculinity - Feminity scale. The lower the grade at which the student terminated his education the greater the deviation from the scale norms tended to be.

Cantoni (1955) and Green (1961) in follow-up research on secondary school dropouts have shown (pre-adult) dropouts for the most part refrain from participation in educational activities as an adult. Other studies have confirmed the positive relationship

between the extent of an adult's prior education and his continued involvement in educational activities (Booth, 1961; Johnstone and Rivera, 1965; Moss, 1968; and Dickenson, 1971).

Although being an ABE student does not necessarily mean a person is "disadvantaged" in all aspects of that concept, the high incidence of educational deprivation among the disadvanted makes research into the characteristics of that group pertinent to the student of ABE students. Anderson and Nemi (1970) have provided a review of research concerning the characteristics of the disadvantaged:

> The disadvantaged have the lowest income, the poorest education, the largest families, the highest incidence of ill health, the least chance of employment and little promise of a better future. In addition, the disadvantaged are hampered by certain psychological disabilities including a lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem and a high degree of dependency. Because of their limited perception of the value of education, the disadvantaged display neither aspiration nor motivation to achieve educational goals. Their lack of verbal facility impedes communication with other than their own kind. Consequently, they become outcasts, withdraw further into their own sub-cultural millieu. In time, the relationship between the disadvantaged and others becomes increasingly tenuous so that the possibilities of communication are lessened and the opportunity for community involvement becomes minimal (p. 28).

METHODOLOGY

The Sample

One hundred forty-two students enrolling in the ABE-high school completion programs within metropolitan Des Moines, Iowa, and the non-urban communities served by the Des Moines Area XI Community College District were the sample for this study. Their age ranged from sixteen to sixty-three years with a mean of twenty-seven years and three months. The age distribution was skewed with a median of twenty-four years and a mode of eighteen.

Eighty-two students were female, sixty, male. Sixty-two were enrolled in programs within urban Des Moines, while eighty were enrolled in outlying communities.

The Adjective Check List

The Adjective Check List (Gough, 1952) is a self-administered personality assessment instrument requiring approximately ten minutes testing time. Considerable evidence has accrued to support the value of the ACL as a personality research instrument (Anastasis,

1968). An extensive bibliography of research using the ACL has been prepared by Gough and Heilbrun (1965, 1971) and Buros (1972).

Figure 1 lists the twenty-four personality scales derived from the 300 behavioral adjectives of the ACL. Scales 1 and 3 through 8 were developed by Gough, while the remainder were devised by Heilbrun (Gough and Heilbrun, 1965). Scales 9 through 23 constitute manifest needs originally catalogued by Murray (1938) and later used by Edwards (1954). Each scale has a normed mean of fifty with a standard deviation of ten.

Procedures

The ACL was administered to enrolling ABE students in accordance with the standard instructions. The ABE teachers were instructed to identify all returned forms which they felt would be invalid because of the student's low reading ability. One hundred forty-two valid forms were received and scored according to instructions (Gough and Heilbrun, 1965).

A univariate "t" procedure was used to test score differences between the ABE student sample and the ACL norms on each of the

FIGURE 1

ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST SCALES

1.	(No. Ckd)	Total Number of Adjectives Checked
2.	(Df)	Defensiveness
3.	(Fav)	Number of Favorable Adjectives Checked
4.	(Unfav)	Number of Unfavorable Adjectives Checked
5.	(S-Cfd)	Self-Confidence
6.	(S-Cn)	Self-Control
7.	(Lab)	Lability
8.	(Per Adj)	Personal Adjustment
9.	(Ach)	Achievement
10.	(Dom)	Dominance
11.	(End)	Endurance
12.	(Ord)	Order
13.	(Int)	Intraception
14.	(Nur)	Nurturance
15.	(Aff)	Affiliation
16.	(Het)	Heterosexuality
17.	(Exh)	Exhibition
18.	(Aut)	Autonomy
19.	(Agg)	Aggression
20.	(Cha)	Change
21.	(Suc)	Succorance
22.	(Aba)	Abasement
23.	(Def)	Deference
24.	(Crs)	Counseling Readiness

twenty-four scales (Blommers and Lindquist, 1960). A multivariate Hotellings T^2 procedure was used as a general measure of the score differences across all twenty-four ACL variables between the two groups (Morrison, 1967). A significance level of .01 was chosen as the minimum acceptable for concluding there were real differences between the two groups.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the univariate and multivariate comparisons for all ACL vaiables between the standardized ACL norm means and the standardized mean scores of the one hundred forty-two adult high school completion students. The Hotelling's T^2 multivariate comparison was found to be significant beyond the .001 level.

The univariate "t" tests showed one sample group variable mean, 19 (Aggression), exceeding the norming means but not at a significant level. Fourteen sample group variable means were found to be significantly below the norming means of the instrument. Eleven of those were below the norm at the .001 significance level: 1. (Number of Adjectives Checked); 3. (Favorable Adjectives

TABLE 1

UNIVARIATE AND MULTIVARIATE COMPARISONS FOR ALL ACL VARIABLES BETWEEN THE STANDARDIZED ACL NORM MEAN (M=50, SD=10) AND THE STANDARDIZED MEAN SCORE OF THE ABE HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION STUDENTS

	Variable	Standardized Sample Means (N=142)	Standard Deviations of Sample Means	t
1.	Number of Adj. Ckd.	38.8	11.5	11.60**
2.	Defensiveness	46.6	11.1	3.64*
3.	Favorable Adj. Ckd.	44.4	11.0	6.05**
4.	Unfavorable Adj. Ckd.	50.3	11.0	.32
5.	Self-Confidence	46.6	8.2	4.92**
6.	Self-Control	46.7	9.4	4.17**
7.	Lability	45.0	8.5	6.54**
8.	Personal Adjustment	45.5	9.3	6.25**
9.	Achievement	46.8	8.6	4.41**
10.	Dominance	49.0	8.0	1.48
11.	Endurance	48.9	8.8	1.48
12.	Order	43.5	8.8	8.77**
13.	Intraception	46.1	8.9	5.20**
14.	Nurturance	46.4	9.4	4.55**
15.	Affiliation	45.9	10.3	4.74**
16.	Heterosexuality	48.0	9.6	2.47*
17.	Exhibition	50.6	8.1	.88
18.	Autonomy	50.0	7.8	
19.	Aggression	51.2	9.7	1.47
20.	Change	47.6	8.5	3.35*
21.	Succorance	50.0	8.7	
22.	Abasement	48.5	8.2	2.17
23.	Deference	49.5	8.3	.72
24.	Counseling Readiness	49.0	8.9	1.33

Hotelling's T^2 = 626.099
F = 21.832 (df=24,117) $p < .001$

* = $2p < .01$
** = $2p < .001$

Checked); 5. (Self-Confidence); 6. Self-Control; 7. (Lability); 8. (Personal Adjustment); 14. (Nurturance); and 15. (Affiliation). Three sample group variable means were below the ACL norm at the .01 level: 2. (Defensiveness); 16. (Heterosexuality); and 20. (Change).

DISCUSSION

It was concluded there were real differences between the adult sample's ACL scores and the norm scores of the ACL instrument. The null hypothesis was rejected. The grossly lower ACL scores on variable 1 (Total Number of Adjectives Checked) may be a manifestation of the students' lower general vocabulary and lower reading vocabulary. This would not be a factor on the other twenty-three variables as the regular ACL scoring procedure adjusts those scores according to the score of the first variable.

The generally lower score of the ABE sample requires careful scrutiny by the researcher using the ACL with such students. The ACL manual tended to express the personality attribute scales in terms of polarities. For example, persons with a high score on

scale 5 (Self-Confidence) were described as assentive and outgoing, while those with a low score were seen as passive and retiring. In the ABE sample scores were significantly more often clustered between the instrument's means and lower pole rather than fully distributed over the full range of the scales. Again, using scale 5 (Self-Confidence) the ABE sample was found more or less passive and retiring rather than ranging from active to passive, outgoing to retiring.

The ACL provided a consistent personality attribute portrait for the ABE sample. A comparison of the interpretations of each of the fourteen scales which were significantly divergent from the ACL's normed means found none to be in psychological opposition. The ABE sample scores showed the student tended to be more anxious, worried and critical of himself and others; less self-confident; less adequately socialized; less satisfied with his current status yet less certain about adventure and risk taking; disliking of delay; more prone to action than thinking; at times self-centered and insensitive to others; and less trusting while more calculating in interpersonal relationships.

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